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China's Sanmao turns 80

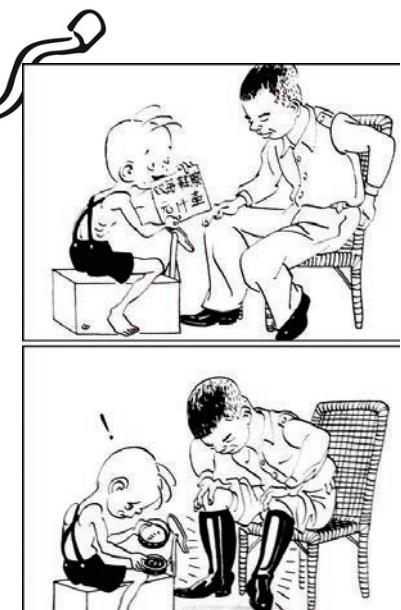


Shanghai's "golden era" was a time characterized by inequality, economic upheaval and hardship.

Moved by the emaciated street urchins and struggling beggars he saw around him, cartoonist Zhang Leping created one of Asia's most enduring characters: Sanmao.

Named for the three hairs on his head, Sanmao lent a friendly face to the children of the streets and entertained the nation with his farmer ingenuity.

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Prison TV begins 10th year on air

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Digging out the roots of modern art

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Tianhe Prison's inmate-produced TV network turns 10 years old

By Zhao Hongyi

Tianhe TV, a station created by inmates and broadcast from Tianhe Prison, turned 10 last Wednesday.

After a decade of steady growth, its programming now reaches more than 100,000 prisoners in 31 provinces, as well as on the islands of Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan.

Humble beginnings

When Tianhe TV began, it was produced by a ragtag band of inmates who shared one camera and one computer, said Liu Kang, director of the prison.

Today, its production facilities include state-of-the-art equipment for realtime editing, mixing and subtitling. The shooting area has a professional lighting setup and several inmates work as full-time editors.

The station's content has expanded from a simple news to more modular programming. It has broadcast more than 365 programs, 5 million words of scripted dialogue and 50,000 hours of news, talk shows, interviews and numerous documentaries.

Last year it even created and aired its own Spring Festival Gala for prisoners throughout the country and abroad.

Great achievements

Tianhe TV Channel is broadcast from the prison's multi-function antenna every 15 days.

Each broadcast runs for



Prisoners edit the programs.



Tianhe TV produces its own news program. Photos by BQB

60 hours and includes 15 segments with positive news, new developments in the prison and general information. More than 20 prisoners

participate in creating the bi-weekly content.

The station has helped many prisoners to understand how their crimes harm

their father, who was also serving a 14-year sentence for fraud.

Their story was made into a theme program called "Tragedy Sister" that was awarded in a municipal programming competition.

Further exploration

The station got its biggest boost in 2007, when a media technology company decided to open a training course in the prison.

More than 80 prisoners enrolled to study video production and editing. After completing the course, they volunteered to work at Tianhe TV.

The prison now selects qualified prisoners to fill various positions in Tianhe TV, said Wang Youdong, deputy manager of the prison. Eleven prisoners have been trained as anchors, and more than 80 as reporters and editors.

As many as half of the prisoners trained at Tianhe TV have been recruited by media production companies after their release.

One man surnamed Shen, who was sentenced to 12 years in prison, became a sound engineer at a recording studio after his release. Today he is the boss and owner of two recording studios.

"The station gives prisoners a platform to train themselves and introduce themselves to fellow inmates," Wang said. "They learn to become skilled individuals who can benefit society after their release."

Scramble for subsidized housing crashes city gov's web server

By Zhao Hongyi

The Beijing municipal government began selling the first 2,000 apartments in its latest "Owner-Occupied Housing" subsidy program on November 30.

More than 100,000 potential buyers pounced on the website, knocking it offline within the first four hours of operation.

The homes, which can only be sold to people who intend to occupy them, are the government's latest attempt to curb speculation in the Beijing housing market, where wild investment has pushed even the cheapest apartment beyond 20,000 yuan per

square meter.

The minimum price for an apartment within Third Ring Road rocketed past 50,000 yuan per square meter earlier this year.

But it's hard to be optimistic about this latest effort given the spectacular failure of the city's last three affordable housing programs.

The city's first attempt in 2000 created a class of "Economical Housing" apartments that were supposed to go to families that earned less than 60,000 yuan per year and whose members had less than 10 square meters of space. Applicants were required to get a stamped

endorsement of qualification from their employer.

In 2004, a survey of the homes revealed that more than 90 percent of the "Economical Housing" apartments were sold to rich property investors and corrupt officials.

Hoping to remedy the situation, the government rolled out another class of "Low-rent Housing" and "Double-Limit Housing" apartments in 2008.

Double-Limit apartments were required to be priced less than 10,000 yuan per square meter and no more than 80 square meters in total. The eligibility require-

ments were similar to those of the 2000 program.

Once again, almost all of the apartments were sold to speculators and rich officials.

The latest housing program includes units priced 22,000 yuan per square meter. Applicants must submit their family records, including combined annual income, average space used by each individual and any record of property ownership. Successful applicants will be entered into a raffle.

"It's hard to own a home in Beijing," Wang Xiaoxi, who moved to the city for work more than a decade ago.

Many academic observers believe the government

is preparing to levy a nationwide property tax based on 8 percent more than the current market value of each apartment.

The rumors have not slowed the real estate rush.

Housing prices continue to rise, and units located within Third Ring Road are expected to cost more than 100,000 yuan per square meter within the next two years.

The government has warned many times that the price of homes will stop rising. Economists say that putting so much money into real estate is a stupid idea due to natural limits on appreciation and the high risk of a crash.

Doctors go private to boost earnings, provide better care

By Bao Chengrong

During the last decade, the number of American citizens receiving treatment from private practice doctors declined from more than 70 percent to less than 40 percent. The trend was driven by insurance woes and the desire for better access to patient records.

But China seems headed in the opposite direction.

Although private doctors are locked out of the national insurance system and denied access to the national database of patient records, many are leaving the public hospitals to strike out on their own.



Pioneer independents

More than 90 percent of the world has licensed, private doctors, but in China it's a new phenomenon.

And one the Ministry of Health never intended.

Four years ago, the ministry inadvertently opened the door to private practice when it allowed doctors to practice medicine at multiple sites. At the time, few doctors were interested in applying for a license because public hospitals served 90 percent of China's patients.

But rising tensions between doctors and patients – several of which have culminated in murder – have convinced many doctors to pack their bags and go into business for themselves.

Zhang Qiang is among the first.

Zhang styles himself as "Dr. Smile," and before becoming an independent doctor was the country's foremost expert on vascular surgery and minimally invasive surgical treatment of varicose veins. He developed several of the field's procedures and holds two national patents.

But in spite of his comparatively high salary, Zhang felt his position was limiting.

The public hospital system required Zhang to see more than 100 patients per day, the scheduling of which left him little time to communicate and plan his patients' best treatment.

He was also bothered by hospital administrators, who badgered doctors to prescribe unnecessary medications. The 15 percent kickback that hospitals receive from pharmaceutical companies is an important source of revenue in the public system.

Zhang made a clean break from the hospital after an especially bad experience with its obstetrician, who insisted his wife would need a Cesarean section to deliver their son: WorldPath Clinic International, a private hospital in Shanghai, told him this was nonsense.

Doctors at WorldPath helped his wife deliver the



Zhang Qiang (left), an independent doctor



Chen Ying at work Photo provided by Distinct Healthcare

baby through normal labor. Seeing the staff put his wife's feelings and wellbeing ahead of their own convenience convinced him that China's public medical system is critically ill.

Zhang left the public hospital for a job at WorldPath Clinic International, where he earns 200 yuan more for his outpatient services. Today, he earns as much as an entire department at a top-tier public hospital.

But more importantly he has time to communicate with his patients. In private practice, Zhang sees no more than nine patients each day.

The private hospital's scheduling also provides Zhang with enough time to perform outpatient surgery: in the public hospital system, outpatient sur-

geries are rarely performed because they require more planning and preparation.

Zhang is planning to build his own medical team in Beijing, where he hopes to recruit many of the country's best independent doctors. Zhang is not alone.

Zhu Yan, a former doctor at Peking Union Medical College Hospital, is one of the founders of Distinct Healthcare, a medical consultancy in Shenzhen. His two co-founders had experience in investment and management and helped him to win over an angel investor.

The team selected Shenzhen as their location: the southern boom town has few big public hospitals and the local government has a reputation for supporting private practice. Its

proximity to Hong Kong also meant residents would be familiar with the concept.

Today, the company owns

four clinics and employs nine

doctors. Patients can pur-

chase a package that includes

treatment and medicine for

380 yuan.

Pediatrics is the most

popular department in his

clinic. The head doctor, Chen

Ying, is also an independent

practitioner.

Chen spends 20 minutes

with each patient – much

longer than the 3 minutes at

public hospitals.

At the public hospital,

Chen was expected to work 12

hours a day to make up for

China's shortage of 140,000

pediatricians. However, chil-

dren are usually prescribed

less medicine than adults,

meaning Chen was among the

hospital's worst-paid staff.

It's one of the reasons

pediatricians are among the

most likely specialists to go

into private practice.

Tough battle ahead

But China maintains heavy limitations on its private clinics.

The nation's public hospitals do not allow private clinics to access the national database of patient records and pre-

scriptions. They are also locked out of the national insurance system, which covers 95 percent of the population.

Private clinics can only work with private insurers.

As poor pay and aggressive patients drive more doctors into private practice, the country may face a scenario where certain classes of medical care become inaccessible to the poor and middle class.

Xie Jibo, a former British family physician, is trying to set another example for doctors who want to serve the people.

Xie maintains two identities: one as the doctor in residence at the high-end private hospital Mediego and another as a doctor in Shuang Yushu Community Hospital, a neglected facility in Haidian District.

The importance of community clinics in the British medical system inspired Xie to take a road unwanted by most Chinese doctors.

Convincing community residents to visit doctors near their home has been a tough mission. Xie said many people consider their community clinic as little more than a subsidized pharmacy. For ailments both minor and major, they insist on visiting the large national hospitals.

To win over the locals, Xie began offering free education classes to teach people about preventing common diseases, such as diabetes. He and his colleagues also offered small gifts and began doing door-to-door health checkups in the neighborhood.

He has slowly built a following.

But practicing in a community hospital means giving up one's high salary. The average community doctor earns no more than 5,000 yuan per month.

Tough as it is, China's first independent doctors still see hope.

"The domestic medical market will definitely gravitate toward free practice during the next 30 to 40 years," Zhang said. Even if his new business fails, he hopes to write a book about the experience to inspire successors.

Genesis of art

Exhibition returns to the birth of China's contemporary art

By Annie Wei

Much of China's contemporary art can be difficult to understand.

To find the answers and context needed to clarify modern creations, the National Art Museum of China is reexamining the New Wave movement of 1985.

The new paradigm

The New Wave movement began in 1985 with an essay and series of pictures by graduate students at the Zhejiang Art Academy – today the China Academy of Art.

The opinions about art and reality it expressed were wildly opposed to the Chinese mainstream at the time.

Teachers and students reacting to the piece noted how the works emphasized a deeper perspective on humanity – one that respected individuality and free expression.

The art seemed to draw energy from modern philosophy and literature and reshape it to represent urban life.

Critics said that the works did not simply mimic Western Modernism: they rediscovered and reconstructed reality, the individual's role in society and the absurdity of life.

Thirty years later, the artists' style has become an ordinary sight. Many of the students from that era have gone on to become the darlings of auction houses.

The movement is, in many ways, the foundation of Chinese contemporary art. The story of its birth and growth within the academies explains the very significant role of schools in this movement.

Enter '85 & an Art Academy

The National Research Center of Modern Art, National Art Museum of China and China Academy of Art are collaborating to explore the dramatic events that happened around 1985 at the Zhejiang Art Academy.

Their new exhibit discusses the history and social implications of the New Wave movement in the context of modern art in the 20th century. It is intended to correct many wrong assumptions about the movement and place the artists in their historical context.

The exhibition, which includes both art and documentaries, is divided into four sections. The first features works related to the article published in Meishu magazine in 1985.

A second section explores the founding history of Zhejiang Art Academy in 1928 and its first principal Lin Fengmin. Lin and other academics founded an art community to devote themselves to promoting modern art in society.

From 1929 to 1934, the art society hosted exhibitions in Shanghai, Nanjing and Japan and founded a couple of art magazines.

The art movement in China has always been focused on the relationship between art and reality, and art and revolution. In the 20th century, there were many intense disputes over whether styles should be formed by or reflect society.

Art historians reckon that the 1980s were the second age of enlightenment in China's modern culture. After the Culture Revolution, China reopened its eyes and ears to its own traditional culture and began accepting information from the West.

The third category showcases an era of breakthroughs, with lectures about modern art from American historians and students' explorations in modern water and ink painting.

The last section focuses on the New Wave movement, and includes works such as *Tai Chi*, a massive conceptual painting by artist Gu Wenda, one of China's first artists to experiment with modern water and ink.

The works represent the vanguard of creativity in Hangzhou in 1985. All artists were from the Zhejiang Art Academy.

'85 & an Art Academy

Where: Floor 5, National Art Museum of China, 1 Wusi Dajie, Dongcheng District

When: Through December 20

Open: 9 am – 5 pm

Tel: 6401 7076



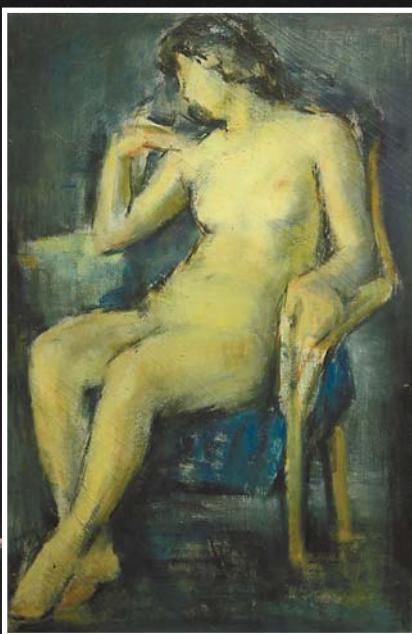
Dream

By Chen Haiyan



Grassland in Winter

By Zhang Kerui



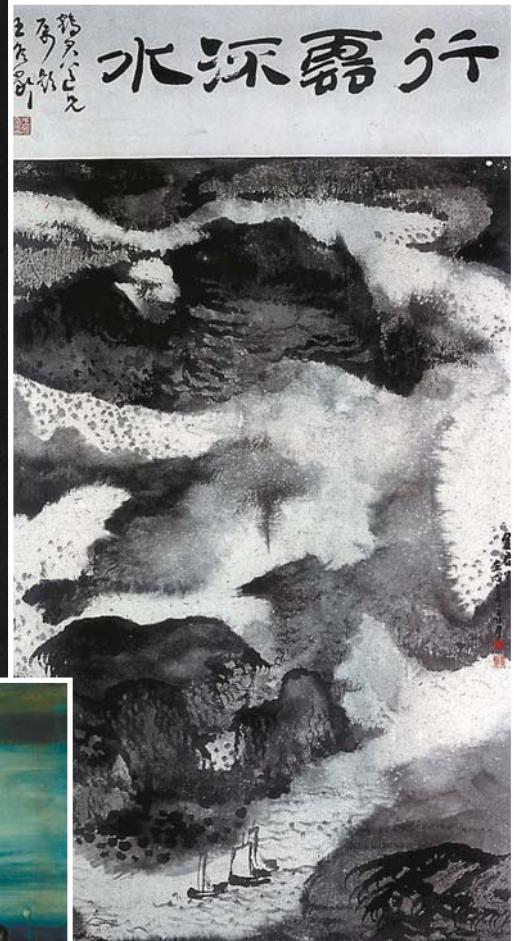
Woman

By Zhao Wuji



Harbor Workers

By Jiang Feng



Floating Water Like Clouds

By Zuo Hejun



Dream of Sea

By Chen Ren

Museum opens tribute to China's favorite comic



By Zhao Hongyi

In 1935, cartoonist Zhang Leping created one of Asia's most enduring characters: Sanmao.

The emaciated boy, named for the three hairs on his head, lent a friendly face to Shanghai's nameless street urchins and children orphaned by Japanese attacks.

But more importantly, Sanmao's biter adventures captured the spirit of social injustice in the city's "golden era."

Zhang's earliest Sanmao comics are being shown this month in a special exhibit at the National Art Museum of China. The works are selected from 243 original strips donated to the museum in 1983.

Like the timeless commentary of Charles Schultz's *Peanuts*, the dark contrast between Sanmao and his rapidly modernizing surroundings rings true 80 years later.

Sanmao's world is a Shanghai in which the rich are kicking the poor to the curb. The panels convey the bitter irony of a penniless country boy striving to integrate into the "Pearl of the Orient."

The strip transformed as China entered a state of war, and Zhang produced a series of dark and bloody comics that depicted Sanmao joining the army to fight the Japanese.

After the civil war, Sanmao evolved into a political tool for condemning old society and was seen everywhere in daily life.

The earlier works remained the most popular and found fans throughout Southeast Asia.

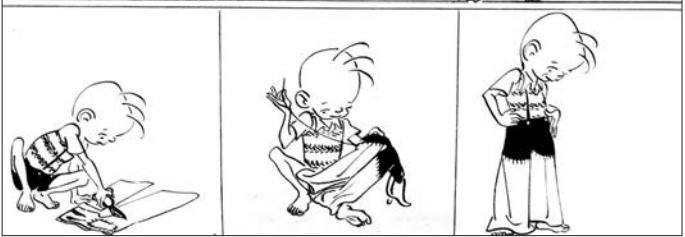
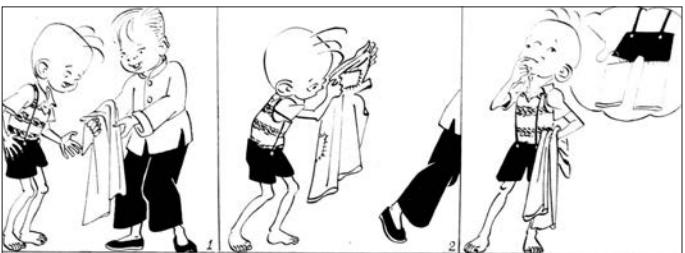
Zhang was born in 1910 in Haiyan County, Zhejiang Province and grew up under the rule of the Beiyang Warlords.

He drew his first comics in 1927 to welcome the arrival of the Guomindang army and satirize the warlords. Although Zhang never attended school, his father – an elementary school teacher – advised him to focus his art on the experiences of the common people to win readers.

In the early 1930s, Zhang moved to Shanghai and began drawing commercial advertisements and comic strips. Soon, most of his income came from the comics, which included *Sanmao*, *Mengmeng Grows Up* and *Mustached Zhang's Life*.

His comics were published in the *Shun Pao* and *Ta Kung Pao* newspapers and were wildly popular with readers.

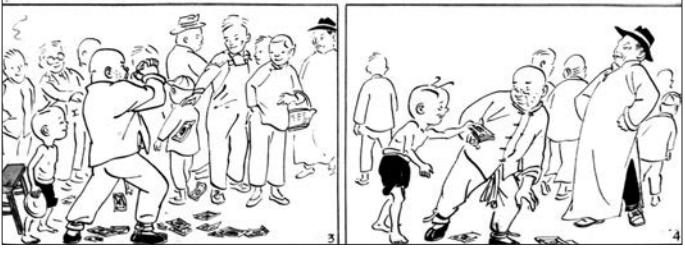
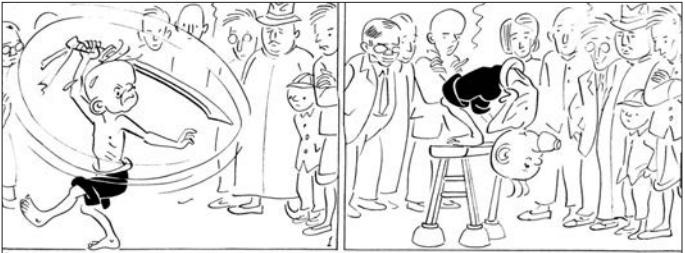
Zhang was eventually recruited to serve as the supervisor of the cartoon department at the People's Pictorial Press. He became editor-in-chief of Cartoon World magazine and worked there until he died in 1992.



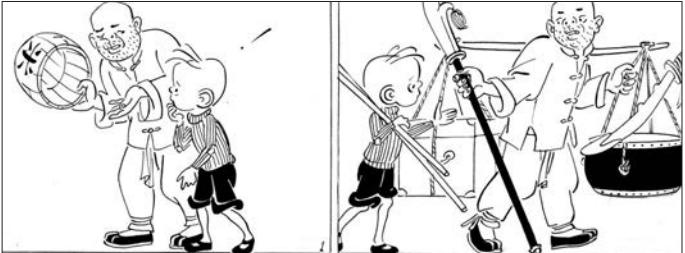
A new pair of "trousers"



Sanmao shows his creativity in mending his clothes.



Sanmao performs folk martial arts for money.



Earning rice requires hard work.

Photos by Zhao Hongyi

Cool items for a cold season



By Annie Wei

This week, *Beijing Today* scouted out the latest practical fashions and accessories.



Blue boots

Midnight blue is the new black

Many people prefer wearing black in winter. And why not? The absence of color seems to be the safest pick.

But if you are looking for something a bit more fashionable, midnight blue is in. The dark tone makes it work well with any blacks in your wardrobe.

Local brand JNBY has a nice lamb fur vest available in black, wine red and midnight blue (from 2,000 yuan). The midnight blue is the best pick of the three with a luxurious yet sexy look that pairs well with black leather skinny pants or jeans.

Leather jeans have been popular for a few seasons. ACNE's new midnight blue leathers available at I.T. stand out compared to the other colors.

Taobao vendors are also selling lots of midnight blue boots this season. They are easy to pair with blue jeans, warm layers or a gray coat. Create a chic look by wearing them with jeans and a silk blouse.

JNBY

Where: Near Yashou market, Floor 1, Sanlitun Tai Koo Li, 19 Sanlitun Lu, Chaoyang District

Open: 10 am – 10 pm

I.T.

Where: B1, Guomao Shopping Mall, 1 Jianguomen Wai Dajie, Chaoyang District

Open: 10 am – 10 pm

Tel: 6505 8884

JNBY Jacket



Electonic facial brush

Facial brush for sensitive skin

Pollution and dirt are harsh even on the best skin. That's why the electronic facial brush by Clarisonic is so popular.

The brush is ideal for oily skin and excels at removing dead cells from your elbows. However, the brush may be too rough if your skin is thin and sensitive. The product's claims of cleaning blackheads and shrinking pores are greatly exaggerated.

It's also expensive, starting from 1,000 yuan.

There is a cheaper alternative that works well on sensitive skin: a simple facial brush, which costs as little as 45 yuan online.

Web: shop70646449.taobao.com



Swarovski crystal jewelry

Everyone loves a little bling

French jewelry designer Shourouk Rhaiem's exaggerated, chunky style has won many celebrity customers and the adoration of fashion houses like Chloe, John Galliano and Roberto Cavalli.

For the upcoming holiday season, Swarovski has teamed up with the designer to create a new collection that brings Rhaiem's creations down to a more affordable price.

It's Golden brooch (from 1,700 yuan) is elegant and easy to pair with most winter sweaters and wool skirts.

Web: www.swarovski.com.cn

Dining Out

Beijing's best lobster at Grill 79



Great Istanbul Classic



Foie gras pot-au-feu

By Annie Wei

Looking for a romantic meal this winter? Try Grill 79's new winter menu by chef Guven. His butter-poached Boston lobster is divine.

"It's a natural dish that really showcases the lobster," he says. "It's all about the taste, not just the presentation."

So he says.

The dish is absolutely beautiful and makes use of healthy and attractive ingredients like green beans, broccoli and asparagus. The homemade American lobster sauce, celery root puree and cream are rich and flavorful.

But lobster is not the only highlight of Guven's new menu. His Caesar salad makes an ideal starter and comes topped with cracked parmesan and garnished with Japanese mushrooms and tomatoes, pata negra and brioche croutons.

He also serves a new twist on the tradition of pot-au-feu, using foie gras to top his soup of slow-cooked beef consommé and plated, cubed vegetables.

Guven grew up in Canada, but his veal cheek shows his Turkish origins. The dish is a "Great Istanbul Classic" made of veal cheek, rice pilaf and eggplant. The veal cheek is slow cooked for 26 hours and comes apart in rich layers with a tender texture.

The new menu has features Guven's seven appetizers, four soups, three risottos and pastas, six main courses and five desserts.

Grill 79

Where: Floor 79, China World Summit Wing, 1 Jianguomen Wai Dajie,

Chaoyang District

Open: 11:30 am – 2 pm; 5-10 pm

Tel: 8571 6459



Caesar salad



Surprise cake



Snowman macarons

Pastry Talk

Creative desserts? Try a surprise cake!

By Annie Wei

Surprise cakes are popular in New York due to their colorful and unpredictable interiors.

Pantry's Best's (pantrysbest.com) co-founder Mark Huetsch has developed his own version that is pleasant to look and tastes delicious.

The surprise cake (299 yuan) is a red velvet cake wrapped in white cheese frosting. The inside has a Mocha-tea flavor Christmas tree shape. The slightly-bitter mocha flavor goes well with the sweet and soft red velvet cake.

Its snowman macarons (99 yuan for five) are also recommended as Christmas gifts or desserts. They come in raspberry and rose, and the cookies taste moist and soft.

Pantry's Best opened four years ago and has built its reputation through word of mouth.

It opened its first outlet at the north gate of Ritan Park in November. The store has three floors, hard-wood tables and chairs and a cozy ambiance. It's a nice to sip and eat after a walk in the park.

Tea Time

Top quality milk tea in Houhai cafe

By Annie Wei

Milk tea is the king of drinks in Hong Kong and much of the south.

Adapted from the British colonial practice of adding milk to black tea, the Hong Kong version blends three kinds of tea with condensed milk and sugar and strains it through cheesecloth to achieve a strong aroma and smooth taste.

E-Cup might be the place in Beijing for well-made milk tea.

"I use a mixture of the best black tea leaves from Sri Lanka and tested it with every milk brand I could find in town," says Xu Xixi, the owner. "Eventually I worked out the best proportion of tea leaves, milk and sugar to create milk tea in the traditional way."

Apart from its signature tea, visitors to Houhai will find good coffee and hand desserts and snacks.

The only problem is that the menu is unstable, and what it offers depends on what's available on the market.

E-cup

Where: 3 Yindingqiao Hutong, Houhai, Xicheng District

Open: Noon to 11 pm, closed Wednesdays

Tel: 15101028209



E-Cup's storefront